

CP AMENDMENT PROPOSAL: Consider the creation and addition of a buildable lands database to the review and evaluation done for Comprehensive Plan updates.

REASON/JUSTIFICATION: Knowing the location, quantity and availability of buildable rural lands should be the first step in short and long term Comprehensive Plan updates.

DISCUSSION:

Some 50,000 people reside in rural Skagit County, most on rural zoned lands. These rural residents are the probably the largest “community” in Skagit with only one respective elected Commissioner, despite providing a significant amount of tax revenue to the County.

The GMA required counties to identify and protect rural lands first. As a result rural lands became the last remaining zones to be addressed in the Comprehensive Planning exercise. However, the rural zones are just as important in the GMA program as resource lands.

Skagit County and its cities create land capacity analysis (LCA) reports for planning purposes to accommodate projected growth. In this analysis the general locations for urban growth must be included. *FOSC v. Skagit County* 95-2-0065 (FDO, 8-30-95).

Under RCW 36.70A.215, a Buildable Lands Report (BLR) is not required in Skagit County, but is permitted. The primary purpose of a BLR is to review whether a county and its cities are achieving urban densities within Urban Growth Areas (UGAs). The BLR compares growth and development targets, objectives and assumptions in the Countywide Planning Policies and comprehensive plans with the actual growth and development that has occurred over the past 5 years of development to see how well the county and its cities have achieved their respective goals.

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan update states that the county has an “industrial and buildable lands inventory”. Is this a database by parcel or simply a map?

We propose the County create a citizen committee to work with Planning Commission members and the Planning Department and/or GIS staff in developing a program and timeline to create the database. We ask the County to seek additional funding, through DOC grants, appropriations or other funding, if it is needed to assist the Committee and staff in developing a buildable lands database and/or a BLR.

We cannot see how Skagit County can evaluate the changes needed in its policies, comprehensive plan and codes without determining if the goals of these are being and have been achieved and to what extent. Having a verifiable BLR would also provide certainty for future planning and development and provide the public with evidence that the planning process is achieving the county’s goals.